

SECRET

EX - 786
5 December 1966


MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: "American Defectors to the USSR"

1. The attached material was part of a soft file entitled "American Defectors to the USSR", which was set up by SR/6 (Support) around 1960 and maintained by various SR components until ca. 1963. The compilations were derived from a variety of sources, and contain both classified and overt data.

2. In the fall of 1966, the files were turned over to CI Staff. In most instances, basic information was then abstracted for the US Defector Machine Program. In all instances in which the material was unique, or represented a valuable collation effort, it has been incorporated into the appropriate 201 file, along with a copy of this memorandum.

3. It is suggested that any dissemination of this data should be coordinated with SB Division and with CI Staff (CI/MRO), in view of the frequently inadequate sourcing and of the fact that disseminations have already been made through the US Defector Machine Program.


JLBender

Orig - CI/MRO
1 - RID/FI
1 - SB/RMO
1 - CI/R&A/JLBender
1 - CI/R&A/chrono

*no info for
L-1/257 17/3/67 JF*

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FBI info

REVIEWED BY FBI/JFK TASK FORCE

ON

5/10/98 db

- ☒ RELEASE IN FULL
☐ RELEASE IN PART
☐ TOTAL DENIAL

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PLANTLI Nicholas (Nicolino at birth but never used), 201-761343, 27750
13 February 1921, Brooklyn, NY
Sheet metal worker, carpenter, and odd jobs. US residence Valley Stream, Long Isl.

World War II. Three years service in airforce, including service in India as enlisted ground crew carpenter. (Ansb Moscow Despatch 111, 11 Sept 59, attached)

October 1945. Medical discharge, for which he granted and still receiving 30% disability pension. According to his own statements, he may have been discharged on mental grounds and may have had later psychiatric treatment from the VA. (Desp. 111)

1945-1953. "For [sic] eight years after the war" he was at a trade school in Los Angeles. (Unidentified newspaper article datelined Moscow 5 Sept 59, cited in DEA-68069 of 21.1.64, in SRS files)

19 Dec 1954. Married Helen SCHOLMER, born 1910 in Russia. (68069)

19 Dec 57. Divorce. She residing Los Angeles with four-year-old daughter; running candy business. (68069)

1958-1959. At this time (and probably in the whole post-war period so far) personality clashes with superiors made it impossible for him to hold jobs. In addition to carpenter and sheet metal worker (apparently his specialties) he worked as acrobat, draftsman, grocery clerk, etc. (68069)

Early August 1959. He departed New York on an organized tour to Western Europe and the USSR. (Desp 111). He said that he paid \$965 (68069). He may have had help from the brother with whom he lived, because except for his irregular working income, he had only his pensions: \$24 to him, \$10 to wife for support of child. (Desp 111)

10 August 1959. Entered Soviet Union at Vyborg, on regular seven-day tourist visa issued in Washington 20 July 1959. On to Leningrad and Moscow the next day. (Desp 111)

12 August 1959. Day his tour group to entrain for Leningrad, there to board the EALTIKA for London. He suddenly decided to stay in Moscow, failed show up at the station, and canceled ship reservations through Inturist guide. He had no communist sympathies or ideological leanings toward the USSR, and had no grievances against the US. Thought he could get a good job in the SU though admitted had no friends there and knew nothing of country, people, or language. (68069)

18 August 1959 and the following ten days. Spoke about his decision to other Americans in the hotel restaurant and elsewhere but did not write home about it. (Desp 111).

27 August 1959. He mentioned his intention in casual conversation with a resident American correspondent, who suggested he inform the Ansb. (Desp 111)

28 August 1959. He visited the Embassy and was interviewed for two hours by Stryker, with the correspondent also present. Gave his reason for wanting to stay. Said had taken initiative by asking hotel manager and Inturist guide how he could stay; no one had indeed or influenced. Upon

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guide's advice he had drafted letter to Supreme Soviet asking Soviet citizenship but had not yet sent it. Still had return ship and plane tickets but was virtually out of money, which he had told Inturist guide; not worried because expected immediate Soviet response to his job request. The pitfalls and exploitation possibilities were explained to him but he dismissed as clock-and-dagger, said had heard time changing in USSR. He was given name and telephone number of American Catholic priest in Moscow, who subsequently talked with him. He was rational, logical, serious, non-aggressive, but insisted on renouncing citizenship and defecting. (Desp. 111)

29 August 1959. He went ahead and sent the letter to the Supreme Soviet. He did not keep a copy but told AmEmb it included five specific points as specified by Inturist guide: 1) DPOB, 2) names and addresses of relatives, 3) his property and bank accounts (none); 4) his skills, education, and work record; and 5) his moral, ideological, and (illegible) reasons for wanting Soviet citizenship. Wouldn't say what he had written under 5) or whether he had said anything against the US. (Desp. 111)

2 September 1959. He came to the Embassy, turned in his passport, told of sending the letter to the Supreme Soviet, and indicated he had not changed his mind. Snyder again explained the irrevocability of renunciation and when Petrulli said he understood seriousness, asked him to come back in the afternoon when Snyder would be prepared to administer the oath of renunciation. This was done. (Desp. 111)

5 September 1959. He told several people that he felt "morally and economically at home in the Soviet Union" ... many jobs in recent years in US and not happy there. ~~(22x42262)~~ Not bitter against US, but just liked SU better: people not in a hurry and not nervous wrecks; he thought they were trying to do things right in the SU. (68069)

8 September 1959. He came to the Embassy to request a written statement of his citizenship status for the Soviet authorities. When told Embassy would inform him as soon as State informed them, he switched to questions re visa requirements for entering US. He felt Sovs giving him runaround because no acknowledgement of his letter or repeated job requests. Mentioned he without money or friends, no speak Russian, etc. which had all been pointed out to him a few days before. ~~Immediately~~ Still no Soviet press exploitation known to Embassy and no approach to the Embassy about him. He still at Hotel Ukraina, at Soviet expense but left to his own devices. Emb opined this might indicate Sovs undecided what to do with him or do not think him good exploitation material. No evidence of provocation or entrapment, but Sovs have deliberately facilitated his actions: permitted him overstay visa, encouraged him through Inturist guide to seek citizenship from Supreme Soviet, and allowed him remain at Ukraina on credit. Petrulli remained neat and rational through all three meetings at Emb. Immediately after this interview at Emb, he told American correspondent he just wanted to go home. (Desp. 111). This was probably what came out in Washington Post on 9 Sept: said he had done stupid thing to renounce US citizenship in hopes of Soviet ... wanted go home ... had renounced US citizenship because of "too many contradictions" in the American way of life ... would decline with thanks even if they now offered him Soviet citizenship ... change of mind not due to disillusionment with SU but because no friends or relatives to look out for him as at home. (68069)

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11 September 1959. On this date an unidentified Soviet official told him (in response to his letter requesting Soviet citizenship) that he should have applied at the SovEmb Washington; manager of Ukraina Hotel told him he would have to vacate the premises by 16 September; and both told him to retrieve his passport from the AmEmb or get some kind of travel document from them, because he had to leave. His brother had sent him \$300. (68069)

15 September 1959. He appeared at AmEmb and told above ultimatum. (68069)

19 September 1959. According to DBA-68069 he applied for an emergency passport on this date, but it seems likely that he must have applied for it on the 15th or some date in between, because a Washington Post article of 19 September (cited in 68069) reported that his US citizenship had already been returned to him, since State had declared him legally incompetent; same appeared in NY Times of 19 Sept. He declared himself "luckiest guy in the world". His serious mental condition further confirmed by ex-wife, who said he a very sick man alternately wonderful and terrible.

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27750

SUBJECT: PETRILLI, Nicholas
aka PETRILLI, Nicolina

Subject, a tourist in Russia, appeared at the American Embassy in Moscow on 28 August 1959, indicating that he wished to remain in the Soviet Union. Despite being cautioned by an Embassy official, Subject insisted that he wished to renounce his American citizenship. He said he liked what the U.S. stands for and thought he would be able to make a better living in that country. He executed an oath of renunciation of his American citizenship on 3 September 1959, and stated that he had applied for Soviet citizenship.

Subject was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 11 February 1931, of Italian-born parents. He was a sheet-metal worker in Valley Stream, New York, who had been divorced, in December 1957, from his Russian-born wife, whom he had married in December 1954, and by whom he has a daughter. Subject reportedly served in the United States Air Force, during World War II, and was discharged in October 1945, after undergoing treatment in a mental hospital. He subsequently had psychiatric care, while living in California.

Subject obtained a passport on 2 June 1957, for a two-week trip to England and Russia; entered the USSR at Viborg, from Finland, on 10 August 1959, on a regular seven-day tourist visa; and entered Iceland as a tourist, on 11 August 1959.

After renouncing his American citizenship on 3 September 1959, Subject reappeared at the American Embassy on 8 September 1959, stating that he felt the Soviets were giving him the run around and that he had changed his mind and wished to retain his United States citizenship and return home. The Soviets had reportedly advised Subject that to obtain Soviet citizenship, he would have to remain in Washington, D. C., and apply at the Soviet Embassy there. According to a foreign service dispatch from Moscow, there was no evidence of planned Soviet provocation or entrapment; but the Soviets had facilitated his actions by knowingly permitting him to overstay his visa, encouraging through his In-Tourist guide to send his citizenship application to the Supreme Soviet, and allowing him to remain on credit at a deluxe hotel.

The State Department ruled that Subject's attempted renunciation of his United States citizenship was not a legally competent act, and he was given a one-way passport for the United States. He returned to his home in New York, on 22 September 1959.

[The above information is largely taken from a foreign service dispatch, of 9/11/59. Information regarding Subject's obtaining a passport to return to the United States, and information regarding his return home, is from New York Times newspaper articles.]

From Civ. Office of Security date 1960 201-761354

The Department of State has no objection to the release or declassification of this document in full under the provisions of the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (PL102-526)

Reviewed on 11/21/95

14-00000

11/27750

PETRULLI, Nicholas

Date of Birth: 13 February 1921 at Brooklyn, N.Y.

Education: Highschool

Military Service: USAF during World War II; discharged 1945 after undergoing treatment in a mental hospital.

Marital Status: Divorced. December 1954 married a Russian-born girl, in December 1957 divorced her; one child, a girl.

Profession: Sheet-metal worker

Date of Defection: August 1959

Petrulli left his family in the U.S., traveled abroad on a two-week trip. He entered the Soviet Union on a regular seven-day tourist visa on 11 August. On 23 August he notified the US Embassy that he wished to give up his American citizenship. When questioned by a stranger, he did not know why he traveled to the Soviet Union, what he planned to do there, how he planned to support himself, and why, specifically, he desired to renounce his American citizenship.

A sheet-metal worker, Petrulli had a history of mental illness. He changed his mind about defecting just before the Soviet Union refused him citizenship. (Wash. Evening Star 26 Nov 59)

He had turned in his passport to the U.S. Embassy, Moscow. The State Department ruled that his attempted renunciation was not a legally competent act. Subsequently, the Embassy issued him a passport valid only for return to the United States. He received a Soviet exit visa less than 2 hours before his plane left Moscow on 21 September. He has since been living with a brother in Valley Stream, Long Island. (New York Times 20 Oct 59)

*Source: reliable info from S. vicinity.
then the reason given was to go
for the trial.*

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Collection Act of 1992 (PL 102-526)
Reviewed on 11/21/95 *[Signature]*

CONFIDENTIAL

201-761354

✓
PETRULLI, Nicholas

Date of Birth: ca 1921

Place of Birth: USA

Date of Defection: summer 1959

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Mrs.

The only PI traces on any Nicholas Petrulli is 1946-47 member of Salvo-Annunzio Communist Party Club, his residence 139 Christopher St., New York City. (DBF-32502, Sept 59)

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Reviewed on 11/21/95 *[signature]*

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The following information is SECRET.

7 PETRULLI, Nicholas ✓
Nicolina PETRULLA
Defected August 1959

While traveling in the USSR as a tourist in the summer of 1959, Nicholas PETRULLI appeared at the United States Embassy in Moscow on 28 August 1959 and informed Embassy officials that he wished to remain in the USSR. On 3 September 1959 he executed an oath of renunciation of his American citizenship and stated that he had applied for Soviet citizenship. On 8 September 1959 PETRULLI returned to the U. S. Embassy and stated that the Soviets were "giving him a run around" and that he wished to retain his American Citizenship. He was given a one-way Passport to the United States and returned to his home in New York on 22 September 1959. A sheet metal worker by profession, PETRULLI was born in Brooklyn, New York on 13 February 1924 of Italian-born parents. He had been divorced in December 1957 from his Russian-born wife whom he married in December 1954 and by whom he has a daughter. During World War II PETRULLI served in the United States Air Force and received a discharge in 1945 after undergoing treatment in a mental hospital. He subsequently had psychiatric care while living in California.

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Reviewed on 11/21/95 mjo/fmjs

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aka PETRILIA, Nicolina

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Collection Act of 1992 (PL 102-526)

Reviewed on 11/21/95 *mg jrd*

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